

Landlord-Tenant Relations Board
Wednesday, April 2, 2014 – 7:00 p.m.

Minutes of the Regular Meeting

421 King St., Suite 200
Conference Room 221
Alexandria, VA 22314

MEMBERS PRESENT: Meloney Driver, Monique Banks, and William Mount.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Julia Colby, Debra Zusman, Christin Damato, Geraldine Baldwin, Matt Damewood and Ramon Venero

STAFF PRESENT: Melodie Seau, Vicente Espinoza

GUESTS PRESENT: Elizabeth A. Nicholson, Taylor D. Sealey, Kenneth Schmidt, Stephanie Hart, Julia Martin, Melissa Rosario, Cathleen Zafares, John Sullivan, Collette Khayechali, Kerry Merek, Sarina Greenberg, Elizabeth Greenberg, Jennifer Torgersen, Dan Carcanague, Mark Harvey, Shamus Branner, Victoria Alabi, and Celeste Roney

CALL TO ORDER:

Meloney Driver called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

REVIEW OF RELOCATION PLAN FOR HUNTING TERRANCE (WEST RIVER STATION):

Taylor D. Sealey of Foulger-Pratt and Elizabeth A. Nicholson of Walsh Colucci Emrich and Lubeley introduced themselves as the representatives of the owner of West River Station Apartments. Mr. Sealey stated that West River Station Apartments is located on a Historic Site of 12 ½ acres of land, but the area of development will be only ½ acre. The existing garden apartment complex consists of 115 total units, with 90 one-bedroom units, 24 two bedroom units and 1 three-bedroom unit. Residents have lease terms of six, nine and 12 months, and some residents are on month-to-month leases. Currently all units are market rate units with no affordable units. The owner is proposing to redevelop the property with 443 units. There have been two meetings with residents. The first was held on July 15, 2013 and the second on February 11, 2014, and residents in attendance were informed of the upcoming renovation and relocation plan for the apartments.

The plan for redevelopment was considered by the Planning Commission the previous night and will be considered by City Council on Saturday, April 12, 2014. The owner anticipates issuing 120 Day Notices around June 1, 2014, but not later than January 1, 2015.

Mr. Mount asked why residents who vacate in the upcoming two months would not qualify for relocation assistance payments, and he asked how many of the developed units will be affordable? Mr. Sealey responded that 24 out of the 443 units would be guaranteed for affordable units or 6% percent of the 443 proposed developed units. Mr. Sealey said he would look into Mr. Mount's question regarding immediate eligibility for relocation assistance.

Ms. Banks asked if a resident receives the 120-Day Notice after paying the rent, and then subsequently decides to vacate in the middle of the month, would the rent be pro-rated for only the remaining days of the tenancy. Mr. Sealey responded that is his understanding.

Ms. Driver asked if residents affected by the displacement could come back to apply for the renovated apartments and how long it will take to complete the renovation. Mr. Sealey responded that they hope that residents will come back to apply for the new apartments, and the renovation will take approximately 20 months.

A resident stated that she just renewed her lease in February, and no one mentioned that there was going to be a renovation plan. Mr. Sealey stated that he was surprised to hear this since there had been two meetings with residents, the first back in July of 2013, and the second only a month ago.

Ms. Banks asked if the rents would be raised for tenants whose leases expire and become month to month. In addition, Mr. Mount followed up on this question to see if the rents can be guaranteed to remain the same for tenants whose leases expire. Mr. Sealey responded that it would depend on the market, but he would take the question back to the owner and management.

A resident noted that \$1,000 in relocation assistance is not enough money to relocate, and also that affordable apartments are disappearing in the City of Alexandria. He asked if the landlord could be more generous in providing additional assistance to relocate. Mr. Sealey responded that the City has a Voluntary Relocation Assistance Policy and the amounts indicated in the plan are in compliance with the City's policy. However, he stated that he will discuss it with management.

Ms. Banks and Ms. Driver asked if there would be a consideration for those residents who had just signed leases. Mr. Mount asked whether tenants under lease could be allowed to break it without penalty. Mr. Sealey responded that he will take the issue to management for discussion.

Mr. Mount asked why there were 49 affordable units listed under a prior plan and the current plan only 24 units. Melodie Seau responded that the original plan with 49 units included a density bonus and that the plan's revision did not include the density bonus.

The Board was concerned about moving forward with a recommendation to City Council without the responses from questions of the Board and residents. Ms. Seau explained that

because there was not a quorum of members present the Board could not act on the plan. Ms. Seau and Mr. Mount said that they would try to convene a special meeting of the Board on Tuesday, April 8, 2014, to ensure that the Board was able to vote on the plan before City Council's Saturday Public Hearing on April 12, 2014.

Mr. Sealey agreed to take the following questions of concern to management for response at a follow up meeting:

- Freezing rents for tenants who are month to month;
- Allowing tenants under leases to break it without penalty;
- Increase the relocation assistance;
- A consideration for those who just signed new leases;
- A preference for displaced tenants who may come back to apply for the redeveloped units.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes were not approved since there was no quorum

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.